

Week Ending Friday, November 29, 1996

The President's Radio Address

November 23, 1996

Good morning. As you know, I'm traveling across the Pacific visiting Australia, the Philippines, and Thailand. Hillary and I and our delegation are enjoying the great natural beauty and the warmth and hospitality of the people of this diverse region.

America's involvement and influence here helps to provide the stability, to promote the economic progress, to encourage the cooperation on many fronts, including preserving our natural environment, that benefits all Americans. With partners and friends like the nations I'm visiting, we're going to enter the 21st century stronger than ever.

This is a good trip, but I'm looking forward to returning home in time for Thanksgiving. More than any other holiday, Thanksgiving reminds us of the importance of family and community and the ties that bind us together. As we gather with our families this year to give thanks, we must never forget the duty we owe to those in our American community who are less fortunate than we are.

The Bible tells us that when we harvest we must not take everything for ourselves but remember to leave something for the poor to glean. Today, those gleanings are the gifts of food we give to those who need them. Across our Nation, in food banks and houses of worship, in community groups, thousands of Americans are taking the initiative to fight hunger and feed their neighbors. We must all do our part and support these efforts because not all the needs are met and we plainly can do more.

For example, we know that too much food goes to waste. In restaurants, cafeterias, and grocery stores across our country, thousands of pounds of perfectly good, healthy food is thrown out every day, enough to feed 49 million people a year. Recovering that surplus food can make a real difference in the fight against hunger in America.

Our administration has tried to help. This past summer, hundreds of young people from our national service program, AmeriCorps, joined private volunteers to get food to the poor. They worked with farmers in the fields, teaching them how to save excess produce. They worked with the Atlanta Community Food Bank and the Congressional Hunger Center to help recover 174 tons of excess food. All told, this past summer they recovered over a thousand tons of food, providing over a million meals. And every week the U.S. Department of Agriculture's cafeteria in Washington sends another 150 pounds of food to a soup kitchen.

Last October I signed into law the good Samaritan food donation act. This law encourages private businesses, local governments, and ordinary citizens to donate food by protecting them from lawsuits. This can make a real difference. Second Harvest, a national food bank network, estimates that the good Samaritan law will result in approximately 25 million pounds of food next year.

Today we're taking two more steps to help fight hunger. First, I'm directing every department and agency in our administration to actively work to promote food recovery and distribution. From now on, all Federal agencies will recover surplus food from their cafeterias, public events, and other food-service facilities. And they'll work with Government contractors, State and local governments, and private businesses to encourage all citizens to do the same.

The second thing we're doing is to make it easier for private citizens to take steps to help feed the poor. Today we're releasing a new handbook, "The Citizen's Guide to Food Recovery." It will tell you how you can get started, the names of the charities in your area that work to recover food, and the lessons we've already learned in communities all across America. You can call a 1-800 number; it's 1-800-GLEAN-IT—that's 1-800-G-L-E-A-N-I-T—to learn more about food

recovery and to get a copy of the Citizen's Guide.

Our Nation has always been a land of plenty. But as blessed as we are, we must never forget that there are those still struggling to take part in America's bounty. Ultimately, all Americans must take responsibility to help our fellow citizens in need. So this Thanksgiving, as we celebrate with our own loved ones, let us remember those who are not so fortunate. By making sure that food does not go to waste we can make the spirit of Thanksgiving real for literally millions of our people every single day of the year.

Thanks for listening, and Happy Thanksgiving.

NOTE: The address was recorded at 7 a.m. on November 22 in Cairns, Australia, for domestic broadcast at 10:06 a.m. on November 23.

Memorandum on Food Recovery Efforts

November 23, 1996

Memorandum for the Heads of Executive Departments and Agencies

Subject: Promoting Food Recovery Activities to Help the Hungry

The American people are blessed with a country rich in natural resources, land that supports an abundance of nutritious food, and an agricultural production and distribution system that is among the most efficient and productive in the world. Thanks to our American agricultural system, most of us are free to enjoy diets rich in both variety and nutrition. However, sometimes food is wasted that could otherwise be used to help Americans who are less fortunate and need a helping hand. Food recovery—the collection and donation of surplus food—can help those Americans in need.

Food recovery by the Federal Government allows us to use part of the immense food resources that otherwise would go to waste, enabling us to share it with those in need at no cost to the Federal Government. For example, the Department of Agriculture has supported food recovery for packaged foods for years and, during the past year, has undertaken a national initiative to help Ameri-

cans recover food of a highly perishable, but nutritious, nature. The food recovered by Federal agencies is mostly prepared in restaurants, hotels, cafeterias, and other institutional settings and would otherwise have been thrown away. In carrying out this activity, thousands of hungry people have been fed at no cost to the taxpayer.

Recently, I signed into law the Bill Emerson Good Samaritan Food Donation Act of 1996, legislation to encourage the donation of food and grocery products to nonprofit organizations for distribution to needy individuals. This law supports food recovery activities by clarifying that, absent gross negligence or intentional misconduct, persons, gleaners, and nonprofit organizations shall not be subject to civil or criminal liability arising from the nature, age, packaging, or condition of apparently wholesome food or an apparently fit grocery product donated, or received as a donation, in good faith, for distribution to needy individuals. The Act also establishes uniform definitions pertaining to donation and distribution of nutritious food; and helps assure that donated foods meet all safety, quality, and labeling standards of Federal, State, and local laws and regulations.

While this Act will help support food recovery in the private sector, we in the Federal Government can do more to help as well. I want to ensure that it is the Federal Government's policy to promote food recovery and to encourage the use of voluntary efforts to assure that no wholesome food goes to waste that can economically be provided to persons in need. I hereby direct the heads of all Departments and Agencies ("agency") to ensure that their employees, contractors, grantees, State and local partners, and others understand this policy and the following guidelines.

Section 1. Policy. It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Federal Government to promote the donation of excess apparently wholesome food and apparently fit grocery products to nonprofit organizations for distribution to needy individuals to assure that no such food goes to waste that can economically be provided to persons in need.

Sec. 2. Procedures.